

# SOLID BLACK FIST

Across the wires! Freedom Fighters' news!



## Issue 2

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*he 13th Amendment to the Constitution declared that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."*

## Letter from the Editor

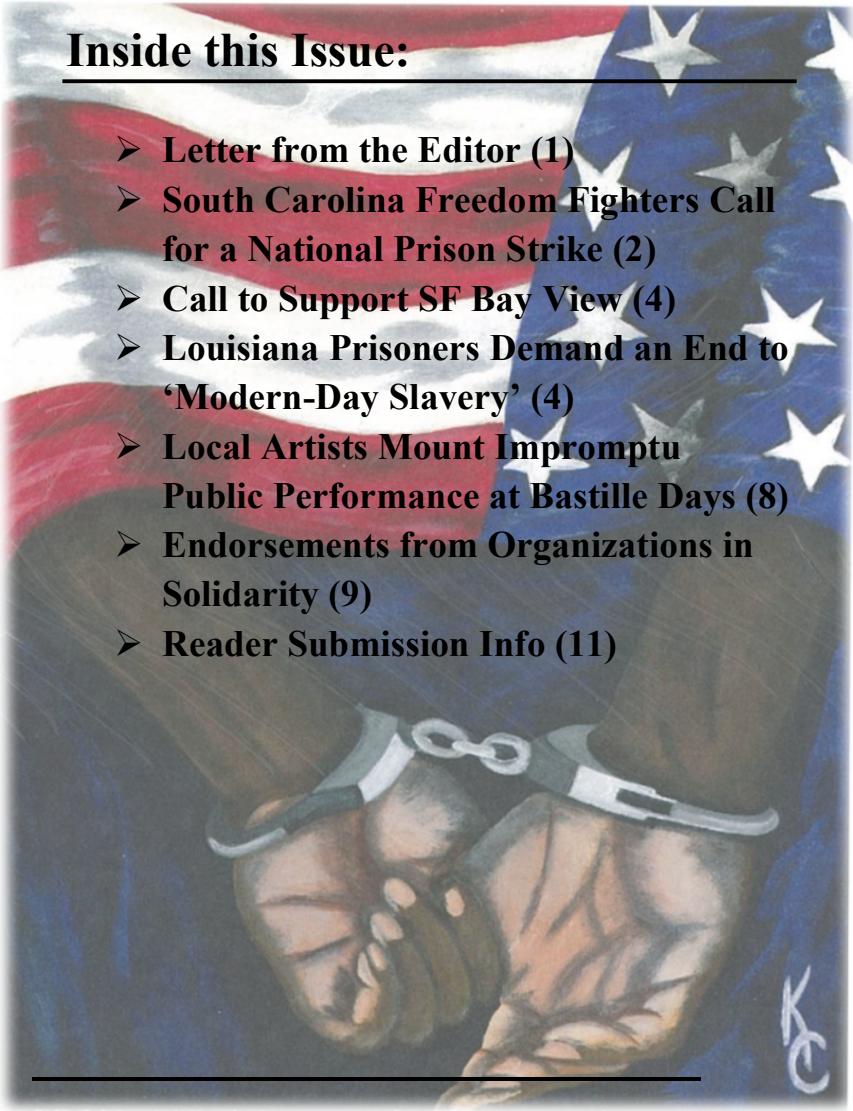
Brothers and Sisters,

In this second issue we highlight more events happening around the country protesting the inhuman conditions of America's prisons, calling for their closure and the abolition of the criminal justice system as we know it today, the Modern Day Slave Trade. The endorsement list has grown substantially, stretching onto multiple pages as requests continue to roll in. More and more groups are eager to join forces with this prisoner led movement. The National Prison Strike is an opportunity for groups ranging from nonprofits like Asheville Prison Books (NC), to student groups like UVa students united (VA) to join forces with incarcerated individuals demanding their rightful place in society as contributing citizens in the sociopolitical sphere. National organizations such as the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC) and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) have sent in endorsements from multiple chapters in different states. Our goal is for prisoners striking in every state to have local support so that citizens in every state can hear about these demonstrations and their demands. You call, we answer, organize and amplify.

In solidarity,  
Amani Sawari (@SawariMi)  
sawarimi.org

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## **South Carolina Freedom Fighters Call for a National Prison Strike**

April 25, 2018| [www.sfbayview.com](http://www.sfbayview.com)



These undated photos from the South Carolina Department of Corrections show, top row from left, Corey Scott, Eddie Casey Gaskins, Raymond Angelo Scott and Damonte Rivera; bottom row from left, Michael Milledge, Cornelius McClary and Joshua Jenkins. The seven were killed and 22 prisoners wounded in a rebellion at the Lee Correctional Institution late Sunday and early Monday, April 15-16, 2018, in Bishopville, S.C.

Introduction: On April 15, a rebellion erupted at South Carolina's Lee Correctional Institution, a maximum security prison, where 44 officers were guarding 1,583 prisoners. A

quarter of all prison jobs in the state are unfilled.

Seven prisoners died – Eddie Casey Jay Gaskins, Joshua Svwin Jenkins, Michael Milledge, Cornelius Quantral McClary, Damonte Marquez Rivera, Raymond Angelo Scott and Corey Scott – and 22 were seriously injured. Ironically, this is being called the deadliest prison violence in a quarter century, since the Lucasville Uprising on April 11-21, 1993. Lucasville survivors on death row are currently on hunger strike.

In an op-ed to the Charlotte Observer, Isaac Bailey, a member of the Observer Editorial Board, wrote what he'd learned from his brother, a long time prisoner at Lee: "Officials say the riot was caused by a turf war over cell phones and other contraband. But James had been detailing to me for more than a year the more likely culprit: deteriorating conditions at Lee. The staffing levels are so low, officers don't make required rounds. That left prisoners inside their cells longer each day. Some weeks, they got to shower twice; other times they went without showers for up to nine days. Prisoners knew officers would not come to the rescue if they were attacked – which provided a major incentive to join gangs as a means of self-preservation.

"Productive programs that can stimulate prisoners' minds and bodies – a real public service, given that most prisoners are eventually freed – have been curtailed. Some prisoners have gone for up to a year without sneakers. There has been a long-term water outage in part of the prison, according to another prisoner I spoke with. Those small indignities add up, yet some officials feign surprise when those treated inhumanely behave in inhumane ways.

"After every incident, prisoners are locked down longer, which leads to more resentment and unrest and more violence, a vicious cycle."

ABC reports that prisoners cannot even escape the violence by locking themselves in their cells. "ALL of the doors to the cells are broken," a prisoner wrote.

A quarrel over contraband having been blamed for sparking the rebellion, on April 18, 14 former guards, a nurse, a groundskeeper and service workers were indicted for taking bribes, wire fraud and smuggling cellphones and cocaine, methamphetamines, marijuana and alcohol into prisons from April 2015 to December 2017.

Men and women incarcerated in prisons across the nation declare a nationwide strike in response to the riot in Lee Correctional Institution, a maximum security prison in South Carolina. Seven comrades lost their lives during a senseless uprising that could have been avoided had the prison not been so

overcrowded from the greed wrought by mass incarceration and a lack of respect for human life that is embedded in our nation's penal ideology.

These men and women are demanding humane living conditions, access to rehabilitation, sentencing reform and the end of modern day slavery.

Men and women incarcerated in prisons across the nation declare a nationwide strike in response to the riot in Lee Correctional Institution, a maximum security prison in South Carolina.

These are the **NATIONAL DEMANDS** of the men and women in federal, immigration and state prisons:

1. Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women.
2. An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.
3. Rescission of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.
4. Rescission of the Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to death by incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.
5. An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in Southern states.
6. An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and Brown humans.
7. No denial of access to rehabilitation programs for imprisoned humans at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender.
8. State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services.
9. Reinstatement of Pell grant eligibility to prisoners in all US states and territories.
10. Recognition of voting rights for all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees and so-called "ex-felons." Their votes must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count!

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We all agree to spread this strike throughout the prisons of Amerikkka! From Aug. 21 to Sept. 9, 2018, men and women in prisons across the nation will strike in the following manner:

1. Work Strikes: Prisoners will not report to assigned jobs. Each place of detention will determine how long its strike will last. Some of these strikes may translate into a local list of demands designed to improve conditions and reduce harm within the prison.
2. Sit-ins: In certain prisons, men and women will engage in peaceful sit-in protests.
3. Boycotts: All spending should be halted. We ask those outside the walls not to make financial judgments for those inside. Men and women on the inside will inform you if they are participating in this boycott. We support the call of the Free Alabama Movement Campaign to "Redistribute the Pain" 2018, as Bennu Hannibal Ra-Sun, formerly known as Melvin Ray, has laid out – with the exception of refusing visitation. See these principles described here: <https://redistributethepain.wordpress.com/>.
4. Hunger Strikes: Men and women shall refuse to eat.

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### How you can help:

- Make the nation take a look at our demands. Demand action on our demands by contacting your local, state and federal political representatives with these demands. Ask them where they stand.
- Spread the strike and word of the strike in every place of detention.
- Contact a supporting local organization to see how you can be supportive. If you are unsure of who to connect with, email [millionsforprisonersmarch@gmail.com](mailto:millionsforprisonersmarch@gmail.com).
- Be prepared by making contact with people in prison, family members of prisoners and prisoner support organizations in your state to assist in notifying the public and media on strike conditions.

- Assist in our announced initiatives to have the votes of people in jail and prison counted in elections.

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## Call to Support SF Bay View

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<http://sfbayview.com/support/>

SF Bay View, which was the first place to print the call for the August strike, has been going through some real financial difficulties of late. The July edition was printed mid-month due to lack of funding. In order to help keep the paper afloat and to continue to make sure that there are print copies of a pro-strike, abolitionist paper getting to prisoners across the country we need your support in the run-up to and aftermath of the strike.



Your donations, along with advertising and subscriptions, are the lifeblood of the Bay View. For most of us, any donation at all is a sacrifice. With all our hearts, we thank you and pledge to use your donation wisely in the struggle for liberation. Click on the Donate button to support the Bay View's work.

If you prefer, call please do so at (415) 671-0789 to make a credit card donation by phone. Or mail your donation to SF Bay View, 4917 Third St., San Francisco CA 94124-2309.

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## Louisiana Prisoners Demand an End to 'Modern-Day Slavery'

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By Bryce Covert June 8, 2018 | <https://theadpeal.org>



[A resident of Angola prison clenches a fence there]

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People incarcerated at Angola want opportunities for education instead of hard labor in the fields. On May 8, a group of prisoners at the Louisiana State Penitentiary refused to perform the field labor they are compelled to do for virtually no pay. The prison, commonly known as Angola, stands on the site of a former plantation named for the origin of the slaves that worked its fields. That connection is not lost on the prisoners or their supporters. "Guys are getting fed up and a lot of guys are just not going [to work]," said Ron,\* a prisoner and a member of Decarcerate Louisiana who helped organize the strike. "They don't want to work for free [because it's] modern-day slavery."



The unrest started the week before, when a prisoner, Kristopher Schoeing, ran out of line, despite what the prison reported as warning shots fired by a guard. The Department of Corrections said in a press release that the work stoppage the following Tuesday took place after two prisoners, Emanuel Williams and Earl Harris, “broke out of the security line as they were heading to work” and “attacked” two corrections officers. After the fight, a prisoner named Roy Walker laid down and refused to work, and 27 others joined him, the press release stated, but resumed work later that afternoon. Williams’s ankle was broken in the altercation.

Alonzo, a prisoner who took part in the strike, contends that version is inaccurate, and instead it began when Walker told the guards that he couldn’t work because he had a bad back. Soon after, he slipped and hurt himself, Alonzo said. In solidarity, when the warden called roll call for the work shift, roughly 50 people refused to go out, Alonzo estimated, nearly double what DOC said. Ron said that some workers have been refusing to work since.

Prisoners in Louisiana say the strike wasn’t a sudden or isolated event but part of more than three years of organizing with the help of their supporters. During the stoppage, the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee issued a list of demands from the prisoners at Angola. “We demand a national conversation,” reads one of them, “inquiring how state prison farms across the country came to hold thousands of people from African descent against their will.” Work at Angola is grueling, Ron explained. The prisoners spend long hours doing manual labor—such as fieldwork harvesting produce—that requires a lot of bending down in the hot sun. Prisoners complain of a lack of water to keep them hydrated and cool.

Ken Pastorick, communications director for the Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections, disputed that assertion. “The prison provides abundant water, ice, and sports drinks for offenders at the institution’s job sites,” he said. “Agriculture work at the prison provides offenders with a skill they may use once they are released from prison, and the produce helps feed the offenders at the state’s prisons.” Pastorick acknowledged the presence of armed guards who patrol the fields where men work. “Because some of our offenders have jobs outside of secure areas, we have a use of force policy which authorizes our staff to use the amount of force necessary to maintain custody and control, and public safety,” he said.

Once cleared by a prison doctor, prisoners at Angola can be legally forced to work under threat of severe punishment, including solitary confinement. Even prisoners with physical impediments may still have to work. “Angola frequently fails to accommodate men with disabilities—often forcing them to work in dangerous factories or in the fields,” said Mercedes Montagnes, executive director of the Promise of Justice Initiative.

For example, prisoner Clyde Carter alleged in a 2016 lawsuit that he was forced to work in the fields even after he tore knee ligaments because his “temporary duty” status excusing him from such work kept expiring. In a separate lawsuit, prisoner Jason Hacker alleged that despite cataracts in his eyes that made him legally blind, he was still forced to work in the fields. Most prisoners who arrive at Angola are



required to perform field labor for at least 90 days. After that, they can apply for other jobs in the prison if they have positive disciplinary records, but there aren't enough nonagricultural jobs for all the prisoners.

For all that hard labor, prisoners make as little as 2 cents an hour, according to the state's 2015 pay regulations, a sum that Ron argues amounts to working for free. According to data collected by the Prison Policy Initiative, prisoners in Louisiana are paid anywhere between 4 cents to \$1 per hour for jobs that support prison facilities, while work on products and services that are sold to outside government agencies and private businesses pays up to 40 cents an hour.

Prison work in Louisiana dates back to before the end of the Civil War, when the state built its first penitentiary, located in Baton Rouge, in 1837 and handed management over to lessees who then profited off the forced labor. Louisiana took control of the Angola plantation in 1901, housing prisoners in old slave quarters and forcing them to work in the existing cotton fields. As recently as 1979, prisoners at Angola were referred to as "hands," not unlike the way slave masters referred to slaves.

"Profit—and not rehabilitation, retribution, or deterrence—became the guiding penological goal of Louisiana State Penitentiary," writes Loyola University law professor Andrea Armstrong, which led to "a profit-oriented policy of inmate plantation farming that closely mirrored slavery." Today, Angola still has the look and feel of the former plantation, with rows of crops tended by the prisoners. Burl Cain, who was warden until 2016, even noted that it's "like a big plantation in days gone by."

Yet, there's also a long history of prisoners resisting their working conditions inside Angola. In the 1950s, 31 prisoners cut their own Achilles' tendons to protest the prison conditions. In the 1960s, two welders refused a direct order to build a lethal injection gurney. After they were placed in solitary confinement, the next day 37 others similarly refused. The action spread to the fields, where hundreds of prisoners staged a work stoppage to protest of what had happened to the welders. Today's organizers want to get rid of forced labor altogether, which is permitted under the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The amendment outlawed slavery but contained a huge loophole: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude," it states, "except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States."

"Given the history of slavery in Louisiana and America, these working conditions need to come under particular scrutiny and concern," Montagnes argued. Armstrong argues that reforming prison labor in Angola would benefit everyone. "People are going to act out if they're treated inhumanely," she said. "Changing the practices can ratchet down the tension, which makes the guards safer and also makes the people who are incarcerated safer," she said.

Activists inside and outside the prison want to see money that's being poured into incarceration instead get invested in education. "Classmates, not cell mates," demands one of their slogans. "We're asking the

governor to de-invest in incarceration and invest higher in education, teacher pay raises,” Ron, one of the prisoners, said. He noted that correctional officers, who nationally make an average of \$47,600 a year, can sometimes out-earn teachers, who in Louisiana make an average of about \$49,700. In 2014, Louisiana ranked 12th in the country for how much it spent per capita on corrections but 34th on school funding.

The prison organizing has coincided with a movement that has taken hold across the country as teachers go on strike and protest slashed education budgets in their states. The hope is that the prisoners may eventually be able to build a coalition with the teachers and potentially even coordinate their strikes. Prisoners want the investment to reach inside prisons, too. “They’re just warehousing us in the cells,” Ron said. All he has for stimulation, he said, is a TV. There are waiting lists for programs such as vocational training or GED classes, Armstrong said, a fact Pastorick said was “due to budget constraints.” In 2012, only 1 percent of Angola’s budget was spent on rehabilitation programs.

This year has seen a lot more prison organizing in Louisiana in particular. “Louisiana is one of the biggest prison states,” said Michael Lucas, a delegate of the Industrial Workers of the World and an active member of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee. “Seeing things pop up there is a really epic and really beautiful thing.” Ron said prisoners at Angola are now planning a protest for Aug. 21, marking 47th anniversary of the death of Black Panther George Jackson while he was incarcerated in San Quentin. Ron is helping to spread the word. “Guys are with it on the inside. It’s just a matter of staying connected in here and also staying connected with people on the outside that support our demands, that support what this movement’s about,” Ron said. “The guys on the inside, [we have to] let them know that they’re not alone in the struggle.”

\*Incarcerated people interviewed for this story requested that only their first names be used out of fear of reprisal.



## Local Artists Mount Impromptu Public Performance at Bastille Days

July 14 2018| <https://closemsdf.org>



July 14, 2018 [Milwaukee, WI] - A group of Milwaukee performance artists descend tonight upon the annual Bastille Day's crowd, promoting positive body awareness clad only in latex body paint, and generally embodying the spirit of the 17th century revolutionaries through their performances. Their message is delivered through historical re-enactments, clever costuming, and public rally cries to "storm the local Bastille" (Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility).



#CLOSEmsdf canvass

## **Upcoming Related Demonstrations:**

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MSDF picket Monday, July 23, 11:30 at the Milwaukee County Courthouse

Monday, July 23, 5 to 7 p.m., Canaan Baptist Church, 2964 N. 11th St. Training will be offered before canvassing begins.

District State Assembly/Milwaukee County Sheriff Candidate Forum Thursday, July 26, 6 to 8 p.m., Baptist Church, 905 W. North Ave., Milwaukee

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## **De-carcerating Wisconsin makes sense**

Mark Rice, JustLeadershipUSA campaign coordinator of #CLOSEmsdf on Devil's Advocate Radio Program:

Despite Minnesota and Wisconsin having similar crime rates, Wisconsin has consistently incarcerated people at twice the rate of Minnesota for decades. Our goals are to decarcerate Wisconsin and close the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility. And the national goal of JustLeadershipUSA is to cut U.S. correctional population in half by 2030. Other states are successfully de-carcerating and reinvesting funds to build stronger healthier communities. States that have decreased prison populations are also seeing a decrease in crime rates.

Most of Wisconsin's Democratic candidates for governor are coming on board and recognizing this as a winning issue and calling for an end to policies and practices that drive mass supervision and mass incarceration.

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## **Endorsements, Organizations in Solidarity**

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ABO Comix  
Aging People in Prison Human Rights Campaign  
Animal Liberation Prisoner Support Toronto  
Asheville Prison Books  
Anti Police-Terror Project  
Bay Area National Prison Strike Solidarity Committee  
BLMChicago  
Black Socialists of America  
Blue Ridge Anarchist Black Cross  
Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Boston  
California Prison Focus  
Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar  
Civic Media Center  
DC IWOC  
DSA Central Brooklyn Chapter  
Enough Is Enough

'We stand with folks on the inside and demand that the mass industrial complex be abolished to make way for truly transformative, restorative, and rehabilitative programs + systems.' -War Resisters League, New York

## FREE THE LAMB MINISTRIES INC

FreeAnons Society  
Grand Rapid Response to ICE  
Guerilla Mainframe  
Hampton Institute  
HU Resist  
iamWE Prisoner Advocacy Network  
Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC)  
Indivisible Midlands  
Libertarian Socialist Caucus of the Democratic Socialists of America  
Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC)  
Michigan Abolition and Prisoner Solidarity (MAPS)  
Millions for Prisoners  
Millions for Prisoners NM Chapter  
Mom Radio  
National Afrosocialists & Socialists of Colour Caucus (AFROSOC) of DSA  
National Brown Berets  
National Lawyers Guild  
The New Afrikan Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter  
New Abolitionists Radio  
New York City Jericho Movement  
Party for Socialism and Liberation  
Peace and Freedom Party  
People and Power Assembly (PPA) Queens  
Prison Abolitionists of Nassau Inciting Change (PANIC)  
Protect Our Stolen Treasures  
Rethink  
Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement  
Seattle Industrial Workers of the World  
Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network  
San Diego Central Committee of the Peace and Freedom Party of California  
Seattle Industrial Workers of the World  
Socialist Rifle Association  
Socialist Organization of North Georgia  
Steel City John Brown Gun Club  
Stinney Distro  
Stop Police Terror Project DC  
Students for Justice in Palestine at USC  
The American Party of Labor  
Support Marius Mason  
The American Party of Labor  
The People's Consortium  
True Leap Publishing Collective  
United Panther Movement  
University of Colorado at Boulder Young Democratic Socialists of America (CU YDSA)  
UVa students united  
War Resisters League  
Women Who Never Give Up, Inc

“We stand in solidarity with people of color under constant threat in our country and abroad. We call for the abolishment of ICE, CBP, and policing as we know it as a whole in America. It is built to protect the elites and supports the white supremacy and patriarchy in our nation and we pledge to disrupt it and support the marginalized people in our communities.” —Invisible Midlands, South Carolina

“The members of the University of Colorado at Boulder Young Democratic Socialists of America stand in solidarity with the striking prisoners. We eagerly anticipate and work towards the day when the shackles of the state are shattered and we live in a truly just society. We unequivocally support all actions, like this strike, that bring us closer to that day.”

The most up to date list of endorsements can be found online at <http://sawarimi.org/groups-organizations-in-solidarity>

Additional Organizations can register and provide their endorsement online at  
<http://sawarimi.org/national-prison-strike>

**Submission Info:** In addition to publishing content raising awareness about the strike and providing updates on the demonstration and its progress, the Solid Black Fist Newsletter also accepts work from prisoners in the form of articles, art and poetry. This demonstration and its campaigns are about you and our most meaningful contributions come from the inside. We also accept submissions from friends and family members of prisoners.

For readers interested in submitting their work: typed and printed can be sent to the return address or emailed to <prisonstrikemedia@gmail.com>; carbon copy: <amanisawari@gmail.com> Submissions should be marked Attn:

Official Site: <http://sawarimi.org/national-prison-strike>

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Additional Copies of this Newsletter can be found at <http://sawarimi.org/npsnewsletter>

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#### **Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners**

1. All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings.
2. There shall be no discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
3. It is, however, desirable to respect the religious beliefs and cultural precepts of the group to which prisoners belong, whenever local conditions so require.
4. The responsibility of prisons for the custody of prisoners and for the protection of society against crime shall be discharged in keeping with a State's other social objectives and its fundamental responsibilities for promoting the well-being and development of all members of society.
5. Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration, all prisoners shall retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, where the State concerned is a party, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as such other rights as are set out in other United Nations covenants.
6. All prisoners shall have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality.
7. Efforts addressed to the abolition of solitary confinement as a punishment, or to the restriction of its use, should be undertaken and encouraged.
8. Conditions shall be created enabling prisoners to undertake meaningful remunerated employment which will facilitate their reintegration into the country's labor market and permit them to contribute to their own financial support and to that of their families.
9. Prisoners shall have access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation.
10. With the participation and help of the community and social institutions, and with due regard to the interests of victims, favorable conditions shall be created for the reintegration of the ex-prisoner into society under the best possible conditions.
11. The above Principles shall be applied impartially.

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